

NEWS ARTICLE

For: April 2000 Issue

To: Dockside

By: Linda K. Bowman, Ext. Agt. IV - Family & Consumer Sciences
Santa Rosa County Extension Service
Telephone: 850/623-3868 or 939-1259, ext. 1360

Extension FoodTalk

- by Linda Bowman

Can Your Kitchen Pass a Food Safety Inspection?

In the home, food safety involves proper storage, handling, and cooking. To learn how well you're doing, see if you can answer "**YES**" to each of these questions adapted from Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommendations.

Is your refrigerator set at 40 degrees F or lower and your freezer at 0 degrees F?

A temperature of 40 degrees F or less slows bacterial growth. Keep your refrigerator as cold as possible without freezing milk or lettuce. Freezing at 0 degrees F prevents bacterial growth, although it **DOES NOT** kill most bacteria already present.

Do you refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours after cooking?

Divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator. Cover loosely. Stir food occasionally to help it cool; use a clean spoon each time. Secure the covering when cooled.

When you use a cutting board for raw meat, poultry or fish, do you wash it with hot soapy water and rinse it with hot water before chopping another food?

Keep raw meat, poultry, and fish and their juices away from other food, especially foods that will be served without further cooking. For example, after cutting up chicken and before slicing salad ingredients:

- wash cutting board with hot soapy water, and
- rinse with hot water

Do you cook hamburgers until they're brown in the center and the cooked-out juices have no trace of pink?

It is especially important that **ground** meat, where bacteria can spread throughout the meat during processing, is cooked thoroughly (160 degrees F for **ground red meat** and 165 degrees F for **ground poultry**). The meat thermometer should penetrate the thickest part of the meat. For a meat loaf or a casserole, place the thermometer in the

center.

To check visually, if you do not use a meat thermometer, cook **ground** meat until the cooked-out juices have no trace of pink when the meat is cut. Juices from red meats change from pink to tan or yellow when meat is well done; poultry juices will look clear.

Ground red meat is usually done when it is brown in the middle. However, color is not always an accurate indicator of a safe internal temperature. As an additional precaution, always use a thermometer (160 degrees F) or check that the cooked-out juices are no longer pink.

Before and after preparing food, do you wash your hands with hot soapy water for at least 20 seconds?

Handwashing is one of the most importance practices you can follow for helping prevent foodborne illness.

Do you thaw foods in the refrigerator?

Food safety experts recommend thawing foods in the refrigerator, the microwave oven, or by submerging the package in a water tight plastic bag in cold water. **DO NOT THAW ON THE KITCHEN COUNTER.** When thawing in cold water, change the water every 30 minutes. Cook food thawed in the microwave oven immediately after thawing.

Thaw packages of raw meat, poultry or fish on a plate on a lower shelf of the refrigerator so their juices won't drip on other food. Raw juices often contain bacteria.

Linda Bowman is Family and Consumer Sciences Agent for the Santa Rosa County Extension Service. She may be reached at 623-3868 or E-mail her at lindab@co.santa-rosa.fl.us.